On Tuesday evening, June 14, we had a talk and discussion on the subject of Dana. “Dana” is sometimes translated as “charity”, or “alms”, or “generous giving”. But it is better translated as “relinquishment”.

Pai-chang said, “It means total relinquishment of ideas as to the dual nature of good and bad, being and non-being, love and aversion, void and non-void, concentration and distraction, pure and impure. By giving them all up, we attain to a state in which all opposites are seen as void. The real practice of the Danaparamita entails achieving this state without any thoughts of ‘Now I have relinquished all of them’.” That is a very high standard.

Dana arises in many forms. Here are some thoughts that came up during the talk and discussion:

I just give ten percent of whatever I get.
I always give to a beggar. And it’s none of my business what they do with it.
Sometimes I’ll buy a homeless person a meal.
I gave some money to a beggar because I liked his sign.
When I was in India, a woman came up to me with her hand out. She had a few coins already in her palm, so I would know what was expected. I was tired, and this time I just put my hand out, and she slapped her coins into my hand and walked away. I never saw her again.
Every time I open the donation box I see everything from a $100 bill, to a penny - we give what we can - we give with our heart
All Bodhisattva activity is Dana. Every time someone comes to the zendo and sits, that’s Dana. Seeing a dust bunny in the foyer and picking it up is Dana. Engaging in samu, committee work, sitting at home, taking care of children - all are Dana.

One can also look at Dana as an unburdening, a dropping off. That’s why I like thrift stores and garage sales. I’m pretty sure that whatever is there was just dropped off with no concern about who might end up with it. Yes, they are just old clothes, books we won’t read again, bric-a-brac that’s been gathering dust. But one person’s junk is another’s treasure. Who has not felt a sense of relief when stuff that we no longer attach to has finally been dropped off?

Can Dana happen after the fact? A few years ago, my bicycle was stolen. At first I was furious. But over time I let go of the anger and decided that whoever took it had a need, and it was okay. Was that Dana?

Ultimately, the whole universe is Dana. Our very lives are Dana. This life is given to us freely with no concern, no strings attached. We just accept with wonder and gratitude.

When we launched our renovation project in 2010 – and the fundraising to match the Colorado State Historical Fund grant – our priority goal was $61,000 to meet our responsibility for accepting the award. The project of roof and foundation repairs, electrical improvements, and lower level wall refinishing has been completed on schedule and within budget.

Our fundraising, on the other hand, needs to go a bit further. At the outset, back in 2010, an insightful Sangha member advised us to conduct a feasibility study to assess the resources within our reach to achieve our goal. We tried to do so, sort of, before realizing that, given the magnitude of this grant opportunity, the Center really could make no other sane decision but to accept the grant and move forward with this critical work. It was rather like Kevin Costner’s “Field of Dreams” movie: “Build it and they will come.”

And our members have come forth. In the first two years of the Preserving the Impermanence campaign, you have pledged almost $47,000. Your generosity is remarkable. And, of course, we thank you for your support. We are almost there. With your continued dedication we fully anticipate reaching our $61,000 goal in Year Three of the campaign, August 2012-2013.

In July, the Fundraising Committee will send out pledge letters for the third cycle of the campaign. Again, with deep bows, we ask every member and friend of the Center to help as best you can to achieve our goal. We especially ask members who have enjoyed the benefits of the temple improvements but who have delayed contributing to join those who have given so devotedly in the past two years. Of course, we understand that each of us operates within our own budgetary parameters and that often our hearts are bigger than our pockets. Even so, when you receive our pledge request, please do what you can. Thank you so much.
On Saturday, April 28, three outstanding guitarists, accompanied by a percussionist and a mariachi player performed before an audience of over 100 in the Zen Center Auditorium.

The music featured flamenco guitarist Steve Mul-llins, Brazilian style guitarist Alfredo Muro, and classical guitarist Kevin Garry.

We heard an eclectic mix of modern and traditional, solo and ensemble playing. There was even a post-modern flamenco composition by Steve, played to a Brazilian rhythm provided by Alfredo (international cooperation?)

This was the first musical performance the ZC has hosted since the construction of the wall dividing the auditorium from the zendo. The acoustics of the new space turned out to be excellent (whew!). The audience was enthusiastic and the musicians loved the venue. We hope to see them back here from time to time.

Thanks to the great performers, and a special thanks to the volunteers who put in a long morning cleaning the auditorium: Dennis Sienko, Bill Wright, Jason Mieger and Mike Griffiths; and those who helped with ticket sales and ushering: Connie Lane, Lorraine Heth and Bill Wright.

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A Guitar Concert at the Zen Center

Photo by Nick Gianoutsous

2013 Zen Center Calendar
Francine Campone and Merilee Schultheiss have been busy creating a 2013 calendar in behalf of fundraising and to be sold in upcoming months. The calendar will be composed of original photography and haiku. It is hoped that we will all consider purchasing them for ourselves and as gifts for others. This very well may be the very first holiday shopping “advisory” yet!

Introduction to Zen Seminars
Want to get more involved with the temple, meet new people, help sprinkle the teachings of Zen Buddhism in the ten directions, and listen to all three teachers expound the Dharma—all in one day? If so, consider volunteering for the next Intro to Zen seminar, September 15. If interested or have questions, sign up on the bulletin board or contact Hoag Holmgren at hoag.holmgren@gmail.com.

Housekeeping Micro-Giving
Housekeeping is an ongoing need around our homes and the Temple. We are going to try an experiment of asking you to give what you can to this work. An extensive list of possible jobs to be done is now posted on the bulletin board. When you have a little time to give, please give the list a look, choose a task or tasks, and complete it or them. Or, you can just notice that something needs to be dusted, cleaned, emptied, straightened, watered and just do it. If you have questions, please contact the office. Thank you!

Lawn Mowing
There is now a sign up sheet on the bulletin board for lawn mowing. Please feel free to......sign up!

Kitchen
Reminder: There is an ongoing need for help in the kitchen before and after teishos and other events.

Zazen
Your zazen practice is always appreciated....give freely, give often.
Three Refuges by
Melanie Ritter
I come home.
I find myself and no self in the Buddha
I allow myself to be nourished by the dharma
I wear the sangha like a shawl around me
. . . warm, secure
I come home
I awaken to the heart of Kannon
The dharma, a waterfall, running . . . always
The sangha, the Sun & the Moon bringing me Night & day

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